

GARBAGE GAZETTE

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

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Minimizing Disposal in the 21st Century: A Proposed Solid Waste Management Plan for Connecticut

The Department seeks your comments on its proposed revision to the solid waste management plan that was last adopted in 1991. The new proposed plan was developed over the last eighteen months with the assistance of a subcommittee of Commissioner Rocque's Waste Management Bureau Advisory Committee. The plan is organized according to the solid waste management hierarchy. It focuses on Connecticut's two most pressing solid waste issues: (1) an immediate and severe shortage of bulky waste landfill capacity and (2) the need to substantially increase the state's source separation and recycling efforts as Connecticut's population grows in order to avoid the need for new or expanded resources recovery facilities (RRFs) and municipal solid waste (MSW) landfills. Although the plan is not a regulation, it does set solid waste policy for the state. The Department reviews every application for a solid waste facility to see whether it is consistent with the plan. The plan is also used to review applications for expanded or new resources recovery facilities, mixed MSW composting facilities, MSW landfills and RRF ash landfills to determine whether they are needed in the state.

Strategies to Manage Bulky/Related Waste – There are only four landfills in the state that have substantial capacity to accept the approximately 2.0 million tons of bulky waste and oversized MSW which the state generates each year. The others are either too small to be used regionally or are closing because they cannot meet modern environmental standards. If all of the state's bulky waste were sent to these four landfills, they would reach capacity in only a few years. The plan proposes the following strategies to deal with this situation.

- ➔ Apply the solid waste management hierarchy and conserve landfill space for essential uses.
- ➔ Chip all landclearing debris for reuse in landscaping or composting.
- ➔ Increase recycling and volume reduction of bulky waste.
- ➔ Use RRFs for disposal if environmentally feasible and capacity is available.
- ➔ Develop lined bulky/special waste landfills for volume reduction facility residue

Strategies to Avoid Additional Resource Recovery Facilities and MSW Landfills – Although Connecticut's source reduction/recycling rate has increased substantially since the 1991 Plan was adopted, our disposal rate has stayed about the same. It is now about 0.73 ton/capita/year. If this rate does not decrease through source reduction and recycling and population grows as projected by the U.S. Census Bureau, the state will need to add RRF and landfill capacity and/or depend on out-of-state disposal. We can avoid this situation by increasing our existing efforts and implementing the following initiatives:

- ➔ Recycle more corrugated and office paper from schools, businesses and institutions.
- ➔ Separate organic waste at large grocery stores, restaurants and institutions for composting.
- ➔ Implement unit-based pricing for waste (pay-as-you-throw systems) to reduce waste disposed by 5-15%.

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A complete copy of the plan is available from Lynn Stoddard at (860) 424-3236. Copies of the plan have been mailed to every library in the state. Public meetings to explain the plan and answer questions are being held in five major cities during December. The public hearings at which you can formally provide your input are scheduled for: January 24, 2000 at the New Haven City Hall, 200 Orange Street at 6:30 p.m.; January 27, 2000 at the Hartford Council Chambers, City Hall, 550 Main Street at 6:30 p.m.; January 31, 2000 at the Bridgeport Council Chambers, City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace at 6:30 p.m.; February 7, 2000 at the Waterbury Aldermanic Chambers, City Hall, 235 Grand Street at 6:30 p.m. and February 10, 2000 at the Norwich Council Chambers, City Hall, 100 Broadway at 6:30 p.m. Snow dates have also been scheduled. Contact Elise Bennett at (860) 424-3297. You can also submit written comments to the Hearing Officer Richard J. Barlow, Waste Management Bureau, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106. Please take these opportunities to provide your suggestions on how to make this plan an effective guide for solid waste management in Connecticut in the years to come.

Looking at Successful Household Hazardous Waste Programs

Every year, Connecticut residents bring their hazardous wastes to collection events through out the state. From 1996 through 1998, the administrators of these household hazardous waste programs submitted participation data to the Department. The Department recently analyzed this data and contacted some of the more successful programs to determine what makes for high residential participation.

From 1996-1998, residents in only four municipalities had no access to a HHW collection. Several municipalities provided only very limited access and had low participation. But the majority of residents had access to more than one collection annually. The average participation rate for all towns during the reporting period was 2.7%. This means that in the average town, 2.7% of all single family housing units were represented at a HHW collection.

As might be expected, host communities had higher participation rates than non-host communities. Host communities averaged 4.7% participation for one-day collections while non-host towns averaged 1.7%. There are three permanent HHW facilities in Connecticut. Excluding the host communities, the average participation rate was 3.4%. But there was a connection between participation at permanent facilities and the driving time. Participation was significantly lower for the outlying municipalities. After about 20-25 minutes of driving time one way, participation starts to wane. The solution is to conduct satellite collections for these outlying communities.

Municipal commitment is also a key to success. The top programs actively promote their programs. Local mailings, newspaper ads, and brochures given to school children are some of the promotional strategies used by the successful programs. Towns with high participation rates tended to have high recycling rates as well. Of the top 20 HHW programs, 14 had above average recycling rates. Of the bottom 20 HHW programs, only 3 were above the state average for recycling. For more information, contact Tom Metzner at (860) 424-3365.



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